

Adopting a Dog

Congratulations! You have just chosen to adopt a dog that will provide you with years of unconditional love and affection. Along with the rewards of pet ownership, come responsibilities. All pets need a good home, an abundance of love and care and training to become a well-behaved companion.



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Section 1: The New Arrival

What to Expect

If you are adopting a puppy, know he may be frightened when you first bring him home. After all, he has been taken to a strange, new place. Although everyone may want to meet and play with your new puppy right away, keeping the initial interactions to a minimum will help reduce any anxiety he may be experiencing. This is especially important prior to his first set of vaccinations being complete.

Expect your pup to actively explore and investigate everything in his path! Puppy proof your home; shoes in a closed closet, things off of the floor etc.

Adopting adult dogs require special considerations. Unlike a puppy, adult dogs have already formed habits; some good, others may be challenging. Details of his life prior to coming to the SPCA and adoption may be unknown so take nothing for granted.

Adjusting to your family

The ideal life of a dog is to be with a family. Dogs are pack animals that need relationships and rules to survive and thrive. Your family has become your dog's pack and it is important for your dog to know where he stands. He must listen and respect the word of everyone, even children. All family members must know the rules and commands for the dog and use them consistently. This is very important; crucial to the success of your adoption.

Section 2: Housetraining

Patience and praise are keys to success in housetraining your new dog. Dogs learn better with lots of love and praise. Fear does not work. Always avoid hitting or screaming at your pet.

Until your new dog is housetrained, confine him to a small area, preferable one that is easy to clean. Make this your dog's domain until he is reliably housetrained. Even an adult dog that is housetrained, can forget his training, especially after an extended shelter stay. Confine your new adult dog to a small area, just as you would a new puppy, until his toileting habits are reliable.

If your puppy or dog sniffs the floor excessively or circles a certain area, he probably has to go out. Take him out immediately!

Lead him to a designated area outside and do not distract him while he sniffs around and eliminates. Praise and reward him when he is finished. Praise is the key.

Set up a regular schedule for feeding your dog so his elimination needs can be determined. Younger puppies are usually fed three times a day and older puppies and adult dogs are fed two times daily.

Establish a routine of going outside; first thing in the morning, when you arrive home from work or school, approximately one hour after your dog eats, just prior to bedtime and following vigorous play or exercise. Very young puppies may need to be taken out every two hours.

If you see your puppy or dog in the act of elimination, say "NO" and quickly take him outside to the designated area; **DO NOT RUB HIS NOSE IN HIS WASTE**. This is degrading, inhumane and ineffective. Do not reprimand your dog if you did not catch him in the act. He will associate the punishment with you, not the accident.

Pee Pad Training for Puppies and Small Dogs

Puppies that must be left alone for extended periods of time may need to use paper or pee pads while you are away. Pee pads are available at pet supply stores and are much more absorbent than regular newspaper.

Keep puppy in a confined area (such as using baby gates to keep him in the kitchen) and place the pee pad away from his food, water bowls, and sleeping area. Dogs are naturally clean animals who are adverse to eliminating where they eat or sleep. Begin with a large pee pad. As your puppy, or small dog, begins to eliminate on the pads, the size of the pad can be gradually reduced.

When you come home, take your puppy outside immediately. Avoid exciting him before you bring him outside or he may not be able to "hold it" and have an accident. While you are home, take away the pee pads and take your puppy outside to eliminate. Eventually, your puppy will be able to wait until you return home to do his business.

Accidents

Even after housetraining, puppies and dogs may have the occasional accident in the house. Instead of assuming you have a “bad dog”, reflect on the following:

- Has the dog been kept on a schedule for feeding and going outside to toilet?
- Has a pet odor neutralizer been used on accident sites to help avoid repeat accidents and pattern creation?
- Is there a possible medical problem? Always check with your veterinarian.

Section 3: Care Basics

Dogs need the help of their owners to live a life that is both healthy and happy.

1. Regular exercise such as walks, runs, playing fetch or Frisbee help your dog stay in shape and reduce risk of obesity
2. Brush your dog regularly. This helps keep your dog’s skin healthy and gives him a lustrous coat. It also loosens dirt and dead hair and keeps dogs cleaner between baths.
3. Always feed your dog fresh food and water. Clean bowls are also important.
4. Carefully chose a special area for your dog’s bed. Use a crate, a pet bed, pad, rugs or blankets. It’s important that he has his own special space.
5. Yearly veterinarian check-ups and vaccinations are must dos for all dog owners.
6. Adjustable collars are the best; it can expand as your puppy grows.
7. Regularly check your adult dogs collar – to be optimally sized, two fingers should fit between the collar and the dog’s neck. It should not be too loose or too tight.

Section 4: Pet Safety

Here are some important tips to keep your dog safe:

1. NEVER leave your pet unattended in the car – especially in warm temperatures. A car – even with the windows opened – can heat up like an oven in a matter of minutes. Hundreds of animals die in unattended vehicles each year.
2. Some plants are poisonous to your dog. Identify toxic plants and ensure they are inaccessible to your dog, or better yet, remove them from your home.
3. Chocolate is poison to dogs – do not feed ANY amount of chocolate to your dog.
4. Bones can be dangerous to a dog, especially oft bones that splinter easily. Bones can lodge in a dog’s throat or stomach and cause fatal punctures. Alternatively, nylon bones are safer to give your dog.
5. Dogs do not belong in the bed / back of pickup trucks. Hundreds of dogs are killed or injured every year from falling from a moving truck. Even if the dog is kept in a carrier, the dog is not protected from weather extremes.
6. Keep your dog in a yard with a secure fence, DO NOT chain or tie up your dog. A chain or rope can cause your dog injury and a chained dog cannot protect itself from other animals that may wander into your yard. Chaining can also create frustration and lead your dog to develop behavioral problems like excessive barking.
7. Provide shelter for your outside dog. Protect him from extreme weather; sun, rain, snow and wind.
8. Ensure your dog has unlimited access to fresh water both inside and outside the home.
9. Walk your dog on his leash. This is for his own safety and the consideration of others.

Section 5: Obedience Training

We sure wouldn't bring a new baby home from the hospital and "let him loose" in the house without any supervision and your new dog is no different. He needs to learn good manners. A responsible owner teaches their new dogs or puppy what is acceptable behavior in their new home.

There is a wide variety of dog training programs in Medicine Hat. Attending training classes are fun for both owners and their dogs, as well as a positive bonding experience. Please check out our website for more information on local dog training resources.

Bad Habits

Most of what dog owners define as bad habits (chewing, biting, digging, jumping and barking) are natural activities for a dog. Owners should concentrate on directing the activity to an appropriate level instead of eliminating it.

1. Dogs need plenty of stimulation and interaction to prevent boredom and loneliness and some breeds need more than others. Some may chew, bark, or dig to express their frustration or vent excess energy.
2. Replace forbidden objects with acceptable toys and treats for your dog to chew.
3. Confine your new pet in a safe place, when they are left unsupervised, especially when a young puppy.
4. Avoid overly exciting your dog to help minimize jumping, biting or excessive barking.
5. Divert your dog's attention by giving him your full attention or offering a replacement activity.

If your dog continues to exhibit poor or inappropriate behaviors, it almost always requires improvement of owner training techniques. That's good news; you can improve your dog's behavior by improving your knowledge and expertise. Changing habits that have been in place for some time is much more difficult than training your new puppy or dog correctly, in the beginning. If you are unsure how to correct your dog's ongoing behavior, please contact a professional trainer, or your veterinarian to refer you to someone.

Section 6: There is No Place like Home

The best place for your dog is in the midst of its family; in contact with the people he loves and needs. You have chosen an unwanted or homeless animal by adopting a shelter dog. Give him lots of love and treat him like a member of the family. He will reward you with undying loyalty and devotion every day.

**adopted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado. C 2000 Dumb Friends League and C 2003 the HSUS. All Rights reserved. |*